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United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs

Tips for Travelers to the Middle East

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General Information

Travelers to the Middle East should exercise caution, especially in areas under military control. Prudence and familiarity with travel requirements and restrictions will allow an enjoyable visit to the varied and historically significant countries of the region.

The Citizens Emergency Center, Room 4811, Department of State, Washington, DC 20520 (tel. 202–647–5225), maintains current information on changes in Middle Eastern countries that may have occurred since the publication of this brochure and which may make it advisable for American travelers to avoid travel to certain countries or parts of countries.

The travel advisories and travel warnings issued by the Citizens Emergency Center also are available at the 13 regional passport agencies in the United States and at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad. Persons traveling to areas where conditions are unsettled should register at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Dual Nationality

Naturalized citizens of the United States are cautioned that some of the countries listed in this brochure do not recognize a person's acquisition of U.S. citizenship unless that person has been given permission to renounce original nationality. For example, under the letter of Syrian law, a person naturalized in the United States is not recognized by Syria as a U.S. citizen unless the Syrian Government has given that person permission to renounce Syrian nationality.

Even in countries where the laws do not require prior permission to renounce original nationality, a former citizen of one of those countries may be considered a citizen again upon resuming residence in the country of origin. (Such is often the case even if the embassy of the country of origin stamps visas in the U.S. passports of naturalized citizens.)

Dual nationals should also be aware that they may be required to use foreign passports to enter or leave the countries of their other nationalities. The U.S. Government does not object to use of a foreign passport by a dual national for entry into and departure from a foreign country in compliance with the requirements of that country. U.S. Travel Control Regulations, however, require U.S. citizens, including dual nationals, to use a U.S. passport for departure from and entry into the United States.

If you have any questions about dual nationality or the use of foreign passports, consult the Office of Citizens Consular Services, Room 4817, Department of State, Washington, DC 20520 (tel. 202–647–6680).

Visa Requirements and Restrictions

A U.S. passport is required for travel to all countries in the region. Because entry regulations are subject to change, it is a good idea to check with the embassy or consulate of the country you plan to visit for up-to-date visa requirements.

A number of Arab countries ask visa applicants to state their religious affiliation. The U.S. Government is opposed to the use of this information to discriminate against visa applicants and has made its views known to the involved governments. In turn, the United States has received assurances that visa applicants are not judged on religious background.

Arab countries may refuse to admit persons who have Israeli stamps or notations in their passports. Some Arab countries, notably those on the Arabian Peninsula, may refuse to admit persons with visas, entry stamps, or other markings from South Africa or certain communist countries.

Egypt, Arab Republic of

All U.S. citizens need a passport and tourist visa to visit the Arab Republic of Egypt. The presence of Israeli visas in U.S. passports will not preclude persons from entering Egypt.

Tourists are required to exchange $150 in foreign currency at the prevailing bank rate for every month of stay in Egypt. Upon entering Egypt, visitors should obtain and have a customs official validate a currency declaration form. Under Egyptian law, officials may confiscate currency from departing travelers who have not declared their funds including traveler's checks.

Foreigners are required to register with the police within 7 days of arrival. Hotels usually take care of this. All hotel bills must be paid in foreign currency or in Egyptian pounds exchanged at the official bank rate, as evidenced by a bank receipt.

Travelers who are planning to bring and use expensive video tape recording equipment in Egypt should check first with the Egyptian Embassy.

If a person travels to Israel overland, the Egyptian exit stamp in their passport will show "Rafah," the name of the border town. Since the only place to go from Rafah is into Israel, that passport probably cannot be used for travel to other Arab countries whether or not there are any Israeli stamps in the document.

All travelers to Egypt should be aware that Egyptian authorities strictly enforce laws which provide the death penalty for anyone convicted of smuggling or selling marijuana, hashish, opium or other narcotics.

For further information about travel to Egypt, check with the Embassy of Egypt, 2310 Decatur Place, NW., Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202–232–5400). (Direct line to consular section is 202–234–3903.)

Iraq

Since November 1984, full diplomatic relations have been resumed with Iraq, and the American Embassy in Baghdad is fully staffed. Visas for travel to Iraq are available to U.S. citizens only for prearranged business with the Government of Iraq or with Iraqi firms. Information concerning visas may be obtained from the Iraqi Embassy, 1801 P

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Street, NW., Washington, DC 20036 (tel. 202–473–7500 or 202–232–6933).

Iran

All U.S. citizens are advised to avoid travel to Iran. Owing to the continuing anti-U.S. atmosphere, the anti-U.S. stance of the Iranian Government, and the present conflict between Iran and Iraq, travel to Iran is extremely hazardous. The possibility exists that U.S. citizens traveling to Iran could be detained without charge or taken hostage.

U.S. interests in Iran currently are served by the Government of Switzerland acting through its embassy in Tehran. Before going to Iran, Americans who also possess Iranian nationality are advised to contact the Office of Citizens Consular Services, Room 4817, Department of State, Washington, DC 20520 (tel. 202–647–6680) since they may face special problems.

Israel

U.S. citizens traveling on regular passports do not need a visa to visit Israel and the territories occupied and administered by the Israelis (the West Bank, Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip).

A few small areas in Israel itself are off-limits to unauthorized persons for military reasons, and American visitors are expected to observe those off-limits restrictions.

Conditions along Israel's cease-fire lines, including the Lebanese border, change frequently, and U.S. travelers planning a visit close to the lines should consult Israeli authorities before traveling to those areas.

U.S. travelers with passports containing Arab-country visas, entry stamps, or exit stamps will have no difficulty entering Israel. Consular services for visitors to Israel are available at the American Embassy in Tel Aviv or the American Consulate General in Jerusalem. (See list of useful numbers at the back of this brochure.)

In recent years, the Government of Israel has imposed a departure tax on all Israeli citizens (including dual nationals normally resident abroad) and on all residents of Israel regardless of nationality. The tax applies to temporary residents including students, as well as to permanent residents. As of October 1985, the tax is $100.

Tourists arriving in Israel must declare to the custom authorities gifts worth more than $125. Currency exchange and economic information may be obtained prior to departure from the Embassy of Israel, 3514 International Drive, NW., Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202–364–5500).

Jerusalem

Local religious holidays vary from year to year, and tourists should consult travel agents for current information. All hotels are likely to be fully booked well before religious holidays so travelers should make their reservations far in advance if travel is anticipated during those times of the year. Consular services such as issuance of passports and visas are provided only at the U.S. Consulate General located on Nablus Road.

Travel to Territories Occupied in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War

Travelers should bear in mind that some sites of historic and religious interest are in the vicinity of the Arab-Israeli cease-fire lines or are in the territories occupied and administered by Israel. Caution should be exercised, especially if traveling to those areas.

The Allenby-King Hussein Bridge crossing the Jordan River is the only land entry between the West Bank and Jordan. Tourists crossing from Israel and the occupied territories to Jordan via the bridge may not be permitted to return to Israel or the territories via the bridge. Those tourists who wish to return may be obliged to go back by way of a third country. Tourists crossing from Jordan to the West Bank must first obtain written authorization from the Jordanian Ministry of Interior in Amman.

Jordan

A valid passport is required for entry into the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Visa information should be obtained prior to departure from the Embassy of Jordan, 2319 Wyoming Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202–265–1606).

Lebanon

The Department of State advises that the situation in Lebanon remains extremely hazardous as of the date of this publication and strongly recommends that American citizens avoid travel to Lebanon for the time being. American citizens in Lebanon should consult with the American Embassy, Awkar, Beirut (tel. 417774, 415802, 415803, 414974, 416502).

Syrian Arab Republic

Americans traveling in or through the Syrian Arab Republic should exercise all possible discretion in taking photographs. Photographs may be taken of regular tourist attractions such as ancient ruins and temples, but warnings are issued against photographing anything other than standard tourist fare.

Travelers to Syria will not be allowed to enter that country if their passports show any evidence of previous or expected travel to Israel.

Visas may be obtained prior to departure from the Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic, 2215 Wyoming Ave., NW., Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202–232–6213).

Naturalized U.S. citizens with prior Syrian nationality who have never been granted permission by the Syrian Government to renounce Syrian citizenship, should check with the embassy prior to travel. Some U.S. citizens of Syrian origin have had difficulties when they remained in Syria after the expiration of their visas.

The Syrian Arab Republic Government recently issued a decree that requires visitors to Syria to change $100 (cash or traveler's checks) into Syrian pounds at the point of entry. In addition,

hotel bills must be paid by Syrian pounds obtained from the Commercial Bank of Syria only (receipt required).

Useful Addresses and Telephone and Telex Numbers

Arab Republic of Egypt

American Embassy
5 Sharia Latin America, Cairo
Mailing address: same as above or
(only from United States) Box 11, FPO NY 09527
Telephone: 3557371
Telex: 93773
Workweek: Sunday–Thursday

American Consulate General
110 Ave. Horreya
Alexandria
Mailing address: same as above or
(only from United States) FPO NY 09527
Telephone: 4925607, 4938941, or 4917330
Telex: none
Workweek: Sunday–Thursday

U.S. Consular Agency (limited services only)
11 El Goumhoureya St., GERCO Building, Apt. 1, Port Said
Mailing address: same or write to American Embassy

Telephone: 23886 or 22154
Telex: none
Workweek: Sunday–Thursday

Iran

U.S. Interests Section
Embassy of Switzerland
Park Ave., and 17th St., No. 5
Tehran
Mailing address: 13/1 Ave. Boustan
P.O. Box 11365/176
Elahieh - Tehran
Telephone: 625223–24, 626906
Telex: 213603
Workweek: Sunday–Thursday

Iraq

American Embassy
Hay Babil, Section 929, Lane 7, Building 57 (opposite
Foreign Ministry Club, Masbah Quarter), Baghdad
Mailing address: P.O. Box 2447 Alwiyah, Baghdad
Telephone: 719–6138/9
Telex: 212287 USINT IK
Workweek: Sunday–Thursday

Israel

American Embassy
71 Hayarkon St., Tel Aviv
Mailing address: same as above or
(only from United States) APO NY 09672
Telephone: (03) 654338
Telex: 33376
Workweek: Monday–Friday

U.S. Consular Agency (limited services only)
37 Ha'atzmaut St., Haifa
Mailing address: same as above or write to American Embassy
Telephone: (04) 672176, (04) 669042, weekends/afterhours: (04) 241395
Telex: none
Workweek: Monday–Friday

Jerusalem

American Consulate General
27 Nablus Rd., Jerusalem (consular and cultural sections)
18 Agron Rd., Jerusalem
Mailing Address: 27 Nablus Rd., Jerusalem or
(only from United States) APO NY 09672
Telephone: (02) 234271
Telex: none
Workweek: Monday–Friday

Jordan

American Embassy
Jebel Amman
Mailing address: P.O. Box 354, Amman or
(only from United States) APO NY 09892
Telephone: 644371 through 644376
Telex: 21510
Workweek: Sunday–Thursday

Lebanon

American Embassy
Awkar, East Beirut
Mailing address: P.O. Box 70–840, Beirut
Telephone: 417774
Telex: none
Workweek: Monday–Friday

Syrian Arab Republic

American Embassy
Abu Rumaneh, Al Mansur St. No. 2, Damascus
Mailing address: P.O. Box 29, Damascus
Telephone: 332315, 330416, 332814
Telex: 411919 USDAMASY
Workweek: Monday–Friday

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